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SUBJECT: POLITICAL ACCORD REACHED WITH CHADIAN OPPOSITION

REF: A. NDJAMENA 594
[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 557

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: After eight months of negotiation under the aegis of the European Union (EU) and the UN, Chad's ruling party (MPS) signed an agreement August 13 with the opposition coalition (CPDC) on reform of Chad's electoral process. The signing took place in the presence of President Idriss Deby Itno. It is not clear what enabled the political opposition to overcome earlier obstacles (reftels) but we understand that a new cabinet (with a new Prime Minister) will be named before the end of August. Key elements of the agreement include electoral commission reform and agreement on both a general and electoral census. A follow-up committee will include EU and UN observers. Successful implementation is not a foregone conclusion, but the agreement reached between the ruling party and the opposition coalition is a welcome step forward in efforts to bring integrity to Chad's democratic institutions and to restore the political consensus that was so badly damaged by the President's decision in 2005 to hold a referendum on eliminating Presidential term limits. End Summary.

The Agreement

[1](#)2. (U) President Deby presided over the August 13 signing of a political agreement between the ruling MPS party and the opposition coalition CPDC. In a carefully choreographed signing ceremony attended by all senior members of the government and the diplomatic corps, former Prime Minister Jean Alingue, speaking on behalf of the CPDC, highlighted the "exclusively Chadian" nature of the agreement. While acknowledging the catalytic role of the EU and the UN, he underscored that the discussions had been "Chadian on Chadian," with participants committed to the restoration of peace in Chad. The seventeen of the more significant opposition political parties that had participated in the negotiations signed the document; other political parties were invited to "initial" only. The lone dissenter, FAR Deputy Ngarlejy Yorongar, withdrew from the discussions months earlier, accusing CPDC members of seeking personal promotion and settling for window-dressing reform.

[1](#)3. (U) A follow-up committee will be established with participation of the political parties. The EU, the UN, the

African Union, and the Organization of Francophonie will observe. Alingue invited other political parties inside and outside of Chad to sign the agreement, and called on the armed opposition to do so as well. He invited the international community to support the agreement "morally and financially" and ended with the exhortation that members wanted to put an end to "transition by violence."

¶4. (U) The agreement contains the following elements: reform of the composition of the National Electoral Commission (french acronym CENI) with guarantees of the Commission's full independence and equal representation from the MPS and opposition parties; agreement on an electoral census (to be preceded by a full national census), agreement on nomad voting and overseas voting, agreement to postpone legislative elections until late 2009 (with current Deputies extended another two years) and agreement on the actual election tally document. A general and electoral census will be conducted. The general census will collect updated and reliable data on Chad's population⁸ and will determine the number of representatives in different electoral districts. (Note: The last census was in 1993, and today no one knows the total population or how much it has changed from region to region or district to district. End note) The electoral census will consist of biometric data and will be established at every local precinct. The agreement did not indicate a timeframe or cost for the general or electoral census.

¶5. (U) Of considerable interest to the opposition parties was the government's acknowledgment of responsibility for creating an environment hospitable to credible elections. To that end the agreement affirms that the military forces, local authorities and traditional leaders will maintain the

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strictest neutrality and the government agrees that the national territory would be "demilitarized" and "depoliticized." The government also committed to "negotiate a social pact" with unions in order to achieve a "durable social peace."

¶6. (SBU) It is understood that the President - who is currently out of the country -- will soon announce a new Cabinet with opposition participation and a new Prime Minister. It is not clear whether the new Prime Minister will be from the opposition, although names bruited to replace current Prime Minister Nouradine Delwa Kassire Koumakoye include that of Jean Alingue and Youssef Saleh Abbas who returned from the rebellion one year ago. In conversation with the government negotiator, Secretary of State for Decentralization Djasnabaille, the latter informed the Charge that some new Ministerial level positions might have to be created in order to accommodate the inflow of opposition leaders. (Comment: with each new government over the past two years the number of ministerial appointments have swelled. There are currently forty-one positions. End comment.). He also said that some MPS leaders would also be obliged to step down "to make sacrifices for their country."

Summer Break? Negotiations suspended in Tripoli

¶7. (SBU) Charge discussed the implications of the political agreement on the armed opposition with several contacts. Almost all interlocutors believe that the armed opposition was losing steam. Some contacts believed that Arab leader Hassan Saleh al-Djinedi was negotiating his imminent return to the government fold. The only rebel leaders whose return was deemed improbable were the Erdimi brothers. (Their fate might be rather to spend more years in exile - defanged - but unable to return without losing considerable face.) Some held out the hope that the armed opposition would reach agreement at the same time as the political opposition, allowing for the formation of a new government drawn from all voices of the opposition. However, this did not pan out, and

it looks as if the political opposition has stolen a march on the armed opposition. Conflicting information has been heard on whether the talks in Tripoli will resume or not.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Comment: We do not know exactly what enabled the CPDC to reach consensus given the divergent views among members on how best to ensure implementation. It may be simply that the MPS conceded on most of the CPDC's key points. In addition, the combination of a Comité de Suivi (follow-up Committee) plus a new government line-up with opposition participation gives them two mechanisms through which to oversee implementation.

¶9. (SBU) Credible elections with full opposition participation in 2009 is still not a foregone conclusion, and the agreement -- for all the fanfare -- may still founder. Nonetheless, it is a welcome step forward in efforts to bring independence and integrity to Chad's democratic institutions and to restore the political consensus that was so badly damaged by the decision in 2005 to hold a referendum on eliminating Presidential term limits. It also reflects well on the EU's ability to mobilize funding and expertise at the right moment and much credit goes to them for facilitating the agreement. End comment.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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